

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
----- 028340

O P 031445Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3565

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3361

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

S E C R E T JIDDA 0796

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINS

SUBJECT: CISCO II

REF: (A) JIDDA 653 (B) STATE 23740 (C) DAMASCUS 414 (D) KHARTOUM 275

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN AFFAIRS INFORMS US THAT PLF HAS AGREED TO RELEASE CAMPBELL AND HARRELL BUT INSISTS THEY BE FREED IN JIDDA. PROBLEM NOW IS HOW TO GET THEM HERE. SAG IS OPPOSED TO BRINGING THEM ACROSS THE RED SEA BY BOAT AS TOO DANGEROUS. PLF IS CONCERNED THAT IF ROUTE THROUGH SUDAN IS USED THE GOS WILL TAKE CHARGE OF CAMPBELL AND HARRELL--SOMETHING PLF UNWILLING HAVE HAPPEN. SAG DOESN'T CARE WHERE THE MEN RELEASED BUT MAY ASK THE GOS TO LET THE PLF BRING THEM TO JIDDA THROUGH SUDAN. THINGS ARE STILL IN VERY TENTATIVE STATE AND SAG ASKS WE NOT REPEAT NOT DISCUSS THE FOREGOING WITH ANY GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY SUDANESE. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEB 3 WE ASKED THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN AFFAIRS TAHA DUGHATHER, WHETHER HE HAD ANY NEW
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INFORMATION ON US PRISONERSHAN ERITREA. HE REPLIED THAT

HE HAD, THAT THINGS SEEMED TO BE MOVING FAVORABLY, BUT THAT HE HAD NOT INTENDED TO DISCUSS IT WITH US UNTIL HE COULD BE MORE DEFINITE. SINCE WE ASKED HE WOULD FILL US IN BUT HE REQUESTED THAT WE TREAT THE INFORMATION AS SENSITIVE AND NOT MENTION IT TO ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT.

2. DUGHAITHER SAID THAT THE PFL HAD AGREED TO RELEASE THE TWO PRISONERS THEY ARE HOLDING (CAMPBELL AND HARRELL) BUT THAT THE PLF INSISTED UPON RELEASING THEM IN JIDDA. A DIFFICULTY HAD ARISEN CONCERNING HOW THE MEN WOULD BE BROUGHT TO JIDDA. DUGHAITHER SAID THAT HE HAD OBJECTED TO BRINGING THEM DIRECTLY ACROSS THE RED SEA BECAUSE OF THE OBVIOUS DANGER TO THEIR SAFETY. (THE PLAN WAS PRESUMABLY TO BRING THEM OVER IN A SMALL BOAT). THE ALTERNATIVE WAS TO BRING THEM OUT THROUGH THE SUDAN. THE PROBLEM HERE WAS THAT THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT INSIST UPON TAKING CHARGE OF THE MEN ONCE THEY ARRIVED IN SUDAN.

DUGHAITHER SAID THAT HE HAD ARGUED WITH THE PLF REPRESENTATIVES THAT IT DIDN'T MATTER WHERE CAMPBELL AND HARRELL WERE RELEASED BUT THE PLF WAS INSISTANT THAT THEY BE RELEASED IN SAUDI ARABIA. IN VIEW OF PLF ADAMANCY ON THIS POINT DUGHAITHER SAID THAT HE WAS PROPOSING THAT THE SAG ASK THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT TO FACILITATE THE TRANSPORT OF CAMPBELL AND HARRELL UNDER PLF CONTROL TO JIDDA WHERE THEY WOULD BE RELEASED. DUGHAITHER SAID FOMMIN PRINCE SAUD WOULD HAVE TO PERSONALLY APPROVE TAKING THE MATTER UP WITH THE GOS. HE SAID HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TO RAISE IT WITH HIM SOON AFTER HIS RETURN FROM HIS CURRENT MISSION TO THE MAGHREB. IN CONCLUDING, DUGHAITHER ASKED SPECIFICALLY THAT WE MAKE NO RPT NO MENTION OF THE FOREGOING TO THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT AS THIS WOULD CERTAINLY COMPLICATE MATTERS.

4. COMMENT: THE SAUDIS HAVE CONSISTENTLY BEEN USING THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE PLF TO OBTAIN CAMPBELL AND HARRELL'S RELEASE AND THEY MAY HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN PERSUADING THE PLF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO LET THEM GO. HERETOFORE THE DIFFICULTY APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE INABILITY OF THE PLF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO IMPOSE ITS WILL ON THE MILITARY

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LEADERSHIP. PERHAPS THE RECENT DAMASCUS MEETING WILL HAVE CHANGED THIS.

5. WE SHOULD RESPECT DUGHAITHER'S REQUEST THAT WE NOT RPT NOT RAISE MATTER WITH GOS AT PRESENT TIME AND IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT VERY TENTATIVE STATE OF AFFAIRS WE WOULD RECOMMEND AGAINST RAISING THE HOPES OF CAMPBELL'S AND HARRELL'S FAMILIES.

PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL LEADERS, PRISONERS RELEASE, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976JIDDA00796
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-0883
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760288/aaaacztc.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 JIDDA 653, 76 STATE 23740, 76 DAMASCUS 414, 76 KHARTOUM 275
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <24 AUG 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CISCO II
TAGS: PINS, SA, (DUGHATHER, TAHA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006